

REMARKS

Claims 1-12 are active in the present application. The claims are amended to remove multiple dependencies. No new matter is added. An action on the merits and allowance of the claims is solicited.

Respectfully submitted,

OBLON, SPIVAK, McCLELLAND,
MAIER & NEUSTADT, P.C.



Norman F. Oblon
Attorney of Record
Registration No. 24,618

Daniel J. Pereira, Ph.D.
Registration No. 45,518



22850

(703) 413-3000
Fax #: (703)413-2220
NFO/DJPER/js

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IN THE CLAIMS

--4. (Amended) Process according to [any of claims 1 to 3] claim 1, in which the grain size of the boron carbide powder ranges up to approximately 50 μm .

5. (Amended) Process according to [any of claims 1 to 4] claim 1, in which the grain size of the hafnium powder ranges up to approximately 20 μm .

6. (Amended) Process according to [any of claims 1 to 4] claim 1, in which the grain size of the hafnium powder ranges up to approximately 10 μm .

9. (Amended) Process according to claim 1 [or 6], in which the homogeneous mixture is sintered in a graphite mould lined with a graphite sheet.

10. (Amended) Process according to [any of the preceding claims] claim 1, in which the mixture is sintered at a temperature of approximately 1800°C to 2100°C, at a pressure of around 70 to 110MPa for a period of approximately 15 to 90 minutes.

11. (Amended) Process according to [any of the preceding claims] claim 1, in which the mixture is sintered at a temperature of approximately 2000°C, at a pressure of around 92 MPa for a period of approximately 1 hour.

12. (Amended) Neutron absorbent material containing boron carbide and hafnium diboride obtained using a process according to [any of claims 1 to 11] claim 1.--